

Manufacturing Job Loss
Statement of Senator Jean Carnahan
United States Senate
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, And Transportation Committee
June 21, 2001

We are all familiar with the manufacturing job loss numbers reported lately. It seems like you can hardly open the newspaper without reading about another factory closing and more job layoffs.

In the Midwest, new unemployment claims have risen almost 45% from the same time three years ago. There is little doubt that job losses are on the rise in the Midwest.

For example, Kansas City recently lost 750 good, high-quality jobs when GST Steel shutdown a steel plant first opened in 1888. Soon, a bakery that has been a part of St. Louis for sixty years will close its doors. 110 workers will be out of a job.

These are only a couple of examples of Missouri plants that have closed in recent years. There are many more examples throughout the Midwest and throughout the country.

When we see articles on these plant closings we see figures like 750 jobs but do we really recognize the impact of this fact? Do we see the impact that a plant closing has on the workers who lose their jobs, their families, and on their communities?

What happens to these laid-off workers? What happens to their families? What happens to the communities where the plants are located?

Often these workers are losing good-paying, skilled jobs. Are they able to find jobs with comparable pay or benefits or are they forced to take a lower paying job just to put food on the table? Are there adequate resources available to help a laid-off worker find a new job?

Is the spouse of a laid-off worker forced to leave the home or take a second job to pay the bills?

We cannot ignore the effect that a mass job loss has on the community in which a factory is located. Without a dependable source of revenue that came from the paychecks of these workers, local businesses, churches, and charitable organizations are bound to suffer.

There are many possible reasons to explain why these jobs are being lost and that is a whole other debate entirely. The key issue is ensuring that we are able to handle the aftermath of these job losses.

Bringing attention to what is happening in our communities through this hearing is a good first step in the right direction.